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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an investigation of how students, parents, and staff of 2 schools with reputations for success (they were among 21 schools in the Canadian Education Association's Exemplary School Project) experience and understand leadership. Specifically, the study, guided by a constructivist conception of leadership, sought to find out how students, parents, and staff members perceive the formal organization of the school; perceive the school culture; perceive and experience routine activities within the school; and perceive and experience nonroutine occurrences within the school. Data for the study were gathered between September 1996 and January 1997. The methods of collection included interviews with staff members, students, and parents; regular observations of classroom, hallway, and extracurricular activities; and observations of school meetings. Relevant school, school district, and government documents, including school handbooks, yearbooks, newsletters, and school board policy manuals were also collected for analysis. Findings raise some caution about the potential success of mandated shared-governance models that may not necessarily allow sufficient time for the kind of cultural changes capable of supporting a move from "vision" to "shared philosophy." Teacher leadership was found to be important. The principal, student, and parent respondents in both schools believed that each school's reputation for success was due largely to the efforts and expertise of the teachers. They also believed that the small size of the schools was a critical factor in supporting respectful relationships, and a positive school environment. However, both schools showed evidence of confusion between leadership and management, an elusive understanding of relationships, and competing theories and notions about what leadership is. Forty-five references are included. (JMD)

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LEADERSHIP IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH A REPUTATION FOR SUCCESS

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Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

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Introduction

The "leadership crisis" (Burns, 1978) is a term which has entered our contemporary language and is indicative of the widespread loss of confidence in leadership and explains in part the current call for organizational restructuring. This loss of confidence can be understood within the context of two issues identified in the research literature. Most significant are the multiple definitions of leadership which have led to the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the notion of leadership itself. Factors underpinning this ambiguity include the confusion between leadership and management, an elusive understanding of the nature of relationships and influence within organizations, and a lack of consensus about the specific variables which constitute leadership. These factors explain in part the proliferation of leadership studies which have given rise to theories and taxonomies which do not endure, but which continue to be researched, to compete, and to inform practice even after they have been proven deficient. As well, these factors contribute to the tendency in both research and practice to reduce "leadership to good management" (Rost, 1991, p. 180). The ambiguity and confusion surrounding the notion of leadership is further complicated by the globalization of economies and the pervasive societal changes that have created an environment in which some theorists and critics are calling for new perspectives on the leadership phenomenon (Heifetz, 1994; Immegart, 1988; Rost, 1991; Wheatley, 1992), while others are questioning orthodox assumptions about organization (Capra, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Senge, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

Within schools, the competing notions of leadership as well as the shift in societal values and the preoccupation with economy and accountability are having a significant impact on the evolution of schooling. The perception that there is a "leadership crisis" within society in general, coupled with the "eternal optimism that reforms in schools will right many of society's ills" (Wilson & Corcoran, 1988, p. 1) underpin the thinking that has generated current educational restructuring initiatives within the developed nations. In the present as in the past, educators and policy-makers have targeted secondary schools as they formulate reform strategies in response to the pervasive belief that the education system is not effectively preparing young citizens, "capable of proactively dealing with change throughout life, in a context of dynamic, multicultural global transformation" (Fullan, 1993, p. 4).

One way in which the research community has responded to the concern about the current state of secondary education is by investigating the "health and not the pathology of secondary schools" (Gaskell, 1995, p. 14). In recent years, several studies have been conducted within secondary schools that have a reputation for success among school

members and community members served by the school. There is, as a result, a growing body of successful secondary schools' literature that is informing the on-going dialogue among researchers, educators, and policy-makers (Gaskell, 1995; Lightfoot, 1983; Lee, Bryk & Smith, 1993; Wilson & Corcoran, 1988). After completing an extensive review of the literature on successful secondary schools, Lee, Bryk and Smith (1993) concluded that because of the dichotomy between sociological and anthropological perspectives within this emergent field, leadership and the issues surrounding secondary school leadership had not yet been fully or directly addressed. Based on their study of 571 successful secondary schools, Wilson and Corcoran (1988) came to a similar conclusion and recommended that "more needs to be known about what type of leadership can create the conditions described by the successful schools' literature and under what circumstances" (p. 13). Clear linkages between leadership and effective organization are as elusive in the successful secondary schools' research as they are in the larger domain of organizational theory (Heifetz, 1994; Immegart, 1988; Rost, 1991; Wheatley, 1992), indicating the need for further inquiry and the development of new perspectives.

Recently, several educational researchers and theorists have argued that it is more appropriate to conceive of schools as "communities," rather than "organizations" when considering models of school leadership with the potential of promoting school improvement (Barth, 1988; Lambert et al., 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1996; Starratt, 1996). The "community of leaders" language and thinking first introduced into the education literature by Barth (1988) has had a significant impact on notions and models of school leadership currently favored by policy-makers intent on education reform. Underpinning the widespread implementation of site-based management, school councils, and shared decision-making, for example, is the belief that collaborative leadership modes which involve parents, students, and staff members have the potential of promoting individual and collective growth and development while enhancing possibilities for school improvement (Barth, 1990; Blase & Blase, 1997; Glickman, 1993; Lambert et al., 1995; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Schlechty, 1990).

With the goal of presenting an original perspective on school leadership, Lambert et al. (1995) through the following definition have linked the "community of leaders" thinking with constructivist assumptions and beliefs about learning: "Leadership is the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling" (p. 29). Their conception differs from conventional views in a number of ways: it suggests that leadership transcends "individuals, roles, and behaviors," and therefore any and all school members can engage in leadership; it links leadership to constructivist learning and the "processes of meaning

and knowledge construction, participation, and reflection;" and it insists on a context of communal relationships in the development of a "common ground about teaching and learning" within schools (p. 29). Intent on developing a constructivist theory of school leadership, these authors have combined and interpreted assumptions regarding what they have called: "reciprocal processes," "participation in educational communities," "construction of meaning," and "common purposes about schooling" (p. 29).

The pervasive loss of confidence in leadership within society in general, and within the educational community in particular, has given rise to the call for new perspectives that address the growing number of questions concerning orthodox assumptions about both school leadership and the organizational context in which it occurs. The doctoral study reported in this paper was conceived and designed within the context described in the preceding (Foster, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of my doctoral study was to investigate how leadership was experienced and understood by students, parents, and staff members in two of the twenty-one schools included in the Canadian Education Association's *Exemplary Schools Project* (Gaskell, 1995). My study was undertaken in the spirit of the successful secondary school research, namely to investigate the "health and not the pathology of secondary education" (Gaskell, 1995, p. 14) while further considering the "type of leadership [that] can create the conditions described by the successful schools' literature and under what circumstances" (Wilson & Corcoran, 1988, p. 13).

In order to conduct this investigation, I adopted a collective case study approach (Stake, 1995) with the belief that the perceptions of students, staff, and parents were instrumental to learning about leadership in secondary schools that have a reputation for success. The general research question which guided this study was: How do the students, parents, and staff within two secondary schools with a reputation for success experience and understand leadership? The specific research questions which guided this investigation were:

1. How do the students, parents, and staff members within selected secondary schools with a reputation for success perceive the formal organization of the school?
2. How do the students, parents, and staff members within these selected secondary schools perceive the school culture?
3. How do the students, parents, and staff members perceive and experience "routine" (i.e., day-to-day) activities within the school?

4. How do the students, parents, and staff members perceive and experience "non-routine" occurrences (i.e., issues and innovations) within the school?

The specific research questions and the questions comprising the semi-structured interview guides did not include the word "leadership." The decision to exclude this word was made following the pilot study conducted in June 1996, where the word "leadership" was used in interview questions with two of the four respondents who participated in that study. From the respondents' answers, it became evident that when I mentioned the word "leadership," the tendency was to focus on a discussion of "principal leadership," to the exclusion of discussion of other leadership initiatives occurring within the school.

My aim through this investigation was in keeping with what Stake (1995) claimed was the final aim of all case study research conducted within a constructivist framework:

> Case study research shares the burden of clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations. Following a constructivist view of knowledge does not require the researcher to avoid delivering generalizations. But a constructivist view encourages providing readers with good raw material for their own generalizing. The emphasis is on description of things that readers ordinarily pay attention to, particularly places, events, and people, not only commonplace description but "thick description," the interpretations of the people most knowledgeable about the case. (p. 102)

To the extent possible, potential linkages between leadership and effective secondary school organization are suggested in this paper. Its main purpose, however, is to report on the findings and conclusions based on my investigation of the leadership phenomenon in two secondary schools that have a reputation for success (Foster, 1998).

Methods

Data were gathered from multiple sources over five months between September, 1996 and January, 1997. Throughout the data gathering, data analysis, and writing of the two case studies reported in my dissertation, I was guided by Lambert et al.'s (1995) constructivist conception of leadership (p. 29). In the following section of this paper, the methods and procedures employed for data collection and analysis are explained under the headings: "Secondary School Sites;" "Data Sources and Data Collection;" "Data Analysis;" and "Standards of Rigor."

Secondary School Sites

The school sites selected for my doctoral study were two of the twenty-one secondary schools included in the Canadian Education Association's *Exemplary Schools Project* (Gaskell, 1995). After reading Gaskell's summary report as well as the individual case study reports written by each team of researchers involved in the project, I selected to examine more closely two of the case study reports which in my mind depicted the

complexity of human experiences and relationships, and which appeared to be promising sites where I could carry out this investigation of the leadership phenomenon.

Riverview School. The school which I have named Riverview served as the site of the first case study. Located in a small rural center in Alberta, Canada, this comprehensive school housed 350 students from grades one through 12. One hundred fifteen students were enrolled in a combination of academic and non-academic level courses in grades 10 through 12 of the secondary school program. Eleven teaching staff, eight full-time and three part-time, delivered the full range of academic and non-academic core courses. Although Riverview School followed a semestered system, several core courses were scheduled over the full year while most were scheduled over one half of the year. Complementary courses available to students included options in physical education, career and technology studies, and the fine arts. Innovative timetabling and a broad selection of courses, including distance education courses, comprised the diverse and flexible secondary school program developed to meet the wide range of student needs within Riverview School.

Evergreen Community High School. The second site, called Evergreen Community High School in my study, was an alternative secondary school housing 120 students in a large urban center in Ontario, Canada. Seven full-time teaching staff delivered the core and complementary courses to students enrolled in grades 10 through Ontario Academic Course level (i.e., OAC). In Ontario, the OAC level is attempted by students after the completion of grade 12. The OAC level comprises five courses in the humanities and/or sciences designed to meet the requirement for university entrance. Evergreen Community High School followed the semester system; all courses were scheduled over one half the year. Evergreen, as an alternative secondary school within the large urban school system, had a mandate to offer an "innovative program." The curricular focus at Evergreen was on the humanities and visual arts, although courses in the sciences and mathematics were also available to students. Every semester, students were required to register in a compulsory community service course called "Outreach."

Data Sources and Data Collection

Data were gathered over a five month period. Data sources included: interviews with staff members, students, and parents; regular observations of classroom, hallway, and extra-curricular activities; and observations of a variety of school meetings. Handwritten field notes were taken during and directly following the observations. Relevant school, school district, and government documents were also collected for analysis over the five month period and included school handbooks, yearbooks, newsletters, school board policy manuals, and the Ontario government discussion paper on secondary education reform.

From mid-September, 1996 through January, 1997, I spent five consecutive weeks in each of the two schools making field observations and conducting interviews. Following this period of daily visits, I made return visits to each school on two separate occasions in order to meet with participants and complete member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 314) of written reports. During the period when I was making daily visits to each school and following the two return visit to each school, fieldnotes were kept and later supplemented by audio-cassette recordings made during the 30 to 40 minutes spent traveling home from each of the two school sites.

Central to this collective case study was the belief that gaining an understanding of the constructed realities of a diverse group of staff members, students, and parents within each secondary school was instrumental in learning about leadership in secondary schools that have the reputation of being successful. Interviewing, therefore, was the primary technique employed for data collection. Before beginning the interviews, I spent approximately one week in each school observing classroom, hallway, staffroom and extra-curricular activities, as well as a variety of formal and informal school meetings. During this initial period, I had numerous informal conversations with students, staff members and parents. Through these conversations and through announcements which appeared in school newsletters, the overall purpose of my presence within each school became known to staff, students, and parents. During this time before interviewing began, potential respondents were identified using the techniques described below in the sections titled "Riverview School Participants," and "Evergreen Community High School Participants." In the case of underage student participants, written permission was sought and gained from parents during this initial period before interviewing began. Once respondents had agreed to become involved, each was provided with a copy of the approved ethics review form which clearly outlined the nature and scope of their involvement in the study, as well as considerations such as anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to opt out of the study.

Each respondent was interviewed on two separate occasions with each interview lasting as long as two hours and as short as 30 minutes with the average length being 45 minutes. The first interview guide was constructed to reflect the research questions, but in order to allow for the greatest understanding of the subjective reality of each interviewee, a semi-structured interview format was used. Participants were encouraged to talk about the school organization, school culture, school activities, and school issues from their point of view.

I made the decision to personally transcribe all tape-recorded interviews for the following three reasons: (1) I found that the process of listening and typing helped me

become familiar with the respondents and prepare for the second interview. The process also helped me become familiar with the content of the interview. (2) Data analysis was continuous throughout the study and not interrupted by the time that typically elapses when tape-recorded interviews are "sent off" to be transcribed by a third party. (3) I found that the time between the first and second interview could be kept relatively short when I did the transcriptions myself. This compression of time and commitment to return transcriptions promptly, I believe, helped me to establish trust and maintain positive relationships with each of the respondents.

After each respondent had an opportunity to review the typewritten transcription from the first interview, a second interview was conducted. It was directed by questions which I had constructed following the first interview and by topics identified by each respondent after he or she had read the transcription from the first interview. In the case of Riverview School, the second interview was not tape-recorded and lasted on average 20 minutes. Handwritten notes describing the content and context of each conversation were made directly following this second interview. In the case of Evergreen Community High School, the second interview was tape-recorded and lasted on average one hour. Handwritten notes describing the context of each conversation were made directly following the second interview. I transcribed these second interviews and returned typewritten copies of the transcriptions to each respondent for member check.

Riverview School Participants. A total of 19 staff members, students and parents from Riverview School participated in the interviews. Included were the principal, the vice principal, five teaching staff members, two support staff members, eight students, and two parents. Following is a brief description of the principal, staff, student, and parent groups.

The principal had been in his current position for 11 years. As well as being the chief administrator in the school, he had also maintained a part-time assignment teaching mathematics to the senior high school students over this 11 year period. His administrative responsibilities included overseeing the elementary and senior high school curricular programs and supervising the teaching staff involved in the delivery of these programs. The vice principal had been in his current position for over 15 years, during which time he had also maintained a part-time assignment teaching senior high school biology. He was also responsible for the administration of the junior high school and the Integrated Occupational programs within the school. He supervised the teachers involved in delivering each of these programs.

Seven of the eleven secondary school teachers and two of the five support staff members participated in the interviews. Selection of these staff members was based on

their availability and willingness to become involved. One of the teacher respondents was new to the school while the others had been part of the staff for between three and fifteen years. One support staff member had been at Riverview School for three years, while the other had been a part of the staff for more than fifteen years. Comprising this staff group were five men and four women.

Two grade 10 students, two grade 11 students, and four grade 12 students were selected based on my observations of each in the classroom and extra-curricular settings. These students, in my mind, were representative of the student population and were invited to participate because I believed that each would provide a unique perspective. Together, this group of students represented the diverse backgrounds and academic abilities that I had observed within the student population. Included within this group of students were four young women and four young men. Written consent from parents was sought and obtained before underage students were invited to participate.

Two parents, both women, were also interviewed and were selected because of their availability and because each had served on one parent committee or another. One of these respondents had three children in different grades within the school; the other had two children in different grades and one child who had recently graduated from the school. When these two parents were invited to participate, it was assumed that each had, over time, become knowledgeable about the school and would be able to provide a unique perspective.

Evergreen Community High School Participants. A total of 22 staff members, students, and parents from Evergreen Community High School participated in the interviews. Included were the principal, all seven teaching staff members, one student teacher, one support staff member, ten students, and two parents. Following is a brief description of the principal, staff, student, and parent groups.

The principal was responsible for the overall administration of school programs and the supervision of staff within the six alternative secondary schools of the large urban school board of which Evergreen Community High School was a part. He had held this position for seven years and had an office housed in the local school district office. Although the principal did not make daily visits to the school site, he maintained regular and frequent contact with teachers, students, and parents through telephone communication and occasional visits.

All seven of the teaching staff members participated in the interviews. Three had been teachers at Evergreen for more than 15 years; two had been on staff for five years or longer; and two had been part of the staff for three years or less. The male student teacher,

a former student of Evergreen, also participated in the interviews. Included in this group were four men and four women.

The office administrator was the only support staff member on site at the school. She had been a volunteer parent within the school before becoming part of the staff in 1978 and was responsible for the operation of the school office.

Nine of the student respondents, four young women and five young men, were selected based on my observations of each in the classroom and extra-curricular settings. These students, in my mind, were representative of the diversity within the student population and were selected because I believed that each would provide a unique perspective. Together, this group of students represented a broad range of backgrounds and academic abilities. One student summarized what I quickly observed within Evergreen Community High School; "Students here don't go by grades" and "age doesn't matter." For my own information, I did ask student respondents their age. One student was 19; two were 18; two were 17; two were 16 and two were 15. A former student also participated in the interviews. She had graduated from the school 15 years before and was in her early 30s. Written consent was obtained from parents before all but the mature student were invited to participate in the interviews.

The two parents, both women, had been involved in parent committees within the school and it was my observation of each during committee meetings that prompted me to invite them to participate in this study. I believed that each of these parents was knowledgeable about the school organization and culture, and would contribute a unique perspective.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in case study research, claimed Stake (1995), is the search for meaning, and "the search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call correspondence" (p. 78). As researchers become engaged in the process of searching for patterns in the data from which interpretations and assertions can be constructed, they "have certain protocols that help them draw systematically from previous knowledge and cut down on misperceptions," concluded Stake. "Still, there is much art and much intuitive processing to the search for meaning" (p. 72). The following is a discussion of the protocols employed and the intuitive processing inherent in the analysis and interpretations of the data collected during this investigation.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) claimed that there are really two stages of data analysis: the first stage of analysis as data are being collected, and the second stage after data collection has been completed (p. 154). Data analysis for my study occurred in the stages

described by Bogdan and Biklen. Merriam (1988) contended that the researcher who fails to recognize the importance of the first stage of analysis that occurs during data collection, "runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (p. 124). Early on during the collection of data, I became aware of running the "risk" of accumulating an "overwhelming" volume of "unfocused and repetitious" data given the number of participants in each of the two school sites. Recognizing this possibility, I made two decisions which had an impact on the way data were processed during this first stage of data analysis:

1. As I began to transcribe the first tape-recorded interviews, I recognized that each respondent's account contributed in a unique way to my understanding of the case. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the uniqueness of each respondent's perspective, I decided to create questions for the second interview which probed individual respondents' perceptions while reflecting the specific research questions. Respondents were provided with a copy of the transcription of the first interview before the second interview took place and were asked to comment on topics from the first interview during the second interview. I found that the questions I had created in preparation for the second interview were often similar to those prepared by the respondents. This correspondence helped me identify initial patterns of meaning in the data and, in my mind, enhanced confirmability and dependability of the research.
2. Throughout the interviewing, preliminary data analysis was guided by Lambert et al.'s constructivist conception of leadership (1995, p. 29). Respondents were encouraged in both interviews to explain in detail their perceptions and how they had come to hold these understandings. In all cases, respondents' accounts included an explanation of how they believed their perspective differed and/or was the same as other people's.

These two techniques employed during this first stage of analysis were helpful in identifying patterns and consistencies in the data and in making the second stage of data analysis "conceptually manageable as well as mechanically feasible" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153).

The second stage of data analysis occurred after all the data had been collected and began with a thorough examination of the observational field notes, and relevant school and school district documents that had been collected from each school site. Drawing on conventional hermeneutical techniques (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), field notes and documents were analyzed and patterns and potential categories were noted in each case. An annotated

summary of analysis in each case was submitted to my supervisor for comments and discussion before interview transcriptions were analyzed. Following a discussion of each annotated summary and potential categories with my supervisor, I reviewed the research questions in preparation for the content analysis of the approximately 2 000 typewritten pages of interview data.

With potential categories and research questions in mind, I undertook an in-depth reading of all pages of the interview transcriptions from both schools. During this reading, I used colored post-it notes and highlighting pens in order to identify passages from the interview transcriptions which corresponded to the potential categories. Other passages were also noted and marked as patterns and consistencies emerged. Through this intense exercise of coding the interview data over a period of three weeks, I was able to identify new categories and modify those that had previously been constructed, and establish an organizational structure for the written reports for the two case studies. The following abbreviated category titles became the common headings used in writing each of the narrative case study reports: "School as Community," "Diversity in Community," "Perceptions of Students," "Perceptions of Staff," "Tensions within Community," "Measuring Success," and "Celebrating Community."

As the purpose of my doctoral study was to investigate how leadership was experienced and understood by staff members, students and parents within each selected secondary school, once these categories had been established, I decided to focus on one school at a time as I continued my analysis of the interview data. The data from each school site, therefore, were analyzed and interpretations and assertions were made in terms of each particular case. At this stage, I also spent time listening to several of the tape-recorded interviews. The sub-headings used in each of the written case study reports are different, emphasize the particular, and reflect the uniqueness of each case.

After the two case study reports had been written and submitted to member check, an in-depth reading of each was undertaken in preparation for the writing of the analysis of each case study report. Patterns were noted and potential themes were highlighted. Comparisons between the two cases were not made in a systematic fashion, but the instances where there was correspondence between the two cases were noted. This analytical exercise took place over a three week period and was significant for two main reasons: themes pertaining to the research questions were constructed; and I was able to develop an organizational structure for the companions to the two case study reports based on these themes. The following titles reflect these themes and became the common headings used in each of the companions to the case study reports: "The Context of

Leadership," "The Processes of Leadership," "Tensions Underlying the Context and Processes of Leadership," and "Interpretations of the Leadership Phenomenon."

Once these themes and the format for the companions to the case study reports had been established, I focused on one case at a time as I undertook the writing. Analysis, interpretations, and assertions were contextualized within the research literature and were made in terms of each particular case. Illustrations from each case study were also included. Narrative and descriptive passages were incorporated into both chapters of my dissertation which I have called "companions to the case studies." After the two companion chapters to the case study reports had been written and submitted to member check, an in-depth reading of each was undertaken in preparation for the writing of the final analysis chapters of my dissertation. Again, comparisons between the two cases were not made in a systematic fashion, but the instances where there was correspondence between the two cases were noted. This inductive analytical exercise was on-going over a two month period and led to the findings and conclusions presented and discussed below.

Standards of Rigor

In addressing the question of rigor in qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) put forth the contention that:

> The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation (p. 2).

The criteria for establishing trustworthiness of research conducted within the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, therefore, are different than those applied to research undertaken within the other paradigms. "Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity" (p. 14). The following discussion of the strategies adopted to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this research has been included so that the reader might assess the rigor that was applied throughout the conduct of my study, and judge the research process and findings. A brief discussion of criteria for judging the authenticity of this research study is also included.

Credibility

In order to enhance credibility, two strategies were employed: triangulation, and member checks.

Triangulation. I attempted to provide for triangulation in four ways:

1. Multiple data sources and data collection strategies were used. Data collected from interviews, field observations, and relevant school documents within each school allowed for triangulation by providing a variety of perspectives on the case.
2. By including several respondents from three different referent groups within each school site, a diversity of perceptions, of constructed realities of each case, were incorporated.
3. By collecting data over a period of five month there were multiple opportunities for triangulation in each case. Data collected over this time period reflected complexities of the case that would not likely have been perceptible if data had been collected over a shorter period of time.
4. At regular meetings with my supervisor during the data collection, analysis, and writing of the case study reports and companions to the case study reports, patterns of meaning, interpretations and assertions were presented and debated in a manner described by Stake (1995) as investigator triangulation (i.e., where alternative interpretations are discussed with other researchers) (p. 113). Presentations based on the on-going study which I made to other researchers at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the American Research Association (Foster, 1997), and at the University of Alberta in November, 1997 provided two more opportunities for investigator triangulation. These interactions with other researchers were helpful in preparing the draft and revised versions of the dissertation.

These attempts to provide for triangulation were undertaken in order "to increase credence in the interpretation, to demonstrate commonalty of an assertion" (p. 112).

Member Checks. Member check, "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholder groups from whom the data were originally collected," claimed Guba and Lincoln (1985) " is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Member checks were conducted at three different stages during the conduct of my study:

1. Typewritten transcriptions from all tape-recorded interviews were returned to respondents for editing and approval before analyzed as data. Respondents were asked to note questions or topics for further discussion. The questions respondents constructed based on the initial interview provided the framework for the second interview.
2. Draft versions of the case study reports were returned to all respondents for editing and approval before analytical themes were constructed and prior to the writing of the companions to the case study reports. Respondents were asked to

make specific comments on how accurately the case study report reflected their perceptions of the case. The feedback from this member check confirmed that the case study reports reflected respondents' experiences and perceptions.

3. Draft versions of the companions to the case study reports were returned to selected respondents from each of the three referent groups for member check. This was undertaken prior to writing the findings and conclusions. The feedback from this member check confirmed that the interpretations of the leadership phenomena included in the companions were resonant with respondents' experiences and understandings.

Transferability

Stake provided an in-depth discussion of transferability whereby he contended that findings from the case study are different than knowledge from other research traditions because they are more concrete and resonant with the experience of the reader of the study, because they are more contextual, because they are more developed by reader interpretation, and because they are based more on reference populations determined by the reader. In order to provide the "data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Stake, 1981, pp. 35-36, cited in Merriam, 1988, pp. 14-15), I attempted to provide for the reader's vicarious experience in the following ways. Both of the case study reports included extensive descriptions and key respondents' accounts. The companions to the case study reports also included extensive descriptions as well as interpretations of, and assertions about the context and processes of leadership in each case. These interpretations and assertions about leadership were embedded in references to the research literature which were included in order to provide data for the further development of reader interpretation.

Dependability and Confirmability

In order to enhance dependability and confirmability, an on-going audit was conducted as part of my study. As part of the on-going audit, during the data collection, analysis, and writing stages of the study, I met regularly with my advisor to review decisions made and questions that had arisen. A record of these meetings has been kept. The audit trail, "the residue of records stemming from the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 319), for my study included records of activities, decisions, and concerns which occurred during all phases of the study. The audit trail comprised electronic and paper entries that have been assembled in such a way as to allow for other audits.

The audit trail, along with the extensive member checks undertaken throughout the data collection, data analysis, and writing stages of my study, were important techniques used to enhance dependability and confirmability.

Authenticity

Beyond the trustworthiness criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed a second set of criteria, the authenticity criteria, which they claimed were important for judging the "goodness and quality of constructivist inquiries." These criteria include fairness, ontological authenticity (enlarges personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understanding of construction of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates to action), and tactical authenticity (empowers action) (p. 114). Over the five month stage of data collection and through the extensive member checks conducted over the length of this study, fairness, ontological authenticity, and educative authenticity were addressed. In January 1997, for example, I made a presentation to secondary school principals in Edmonton, Canada based on the research in progress. Throughout the conduct of my study, I maintained several on-going dialogues with colleagues from the field. The feedback from practitioners proved useful in addressing matters of authenticity. The final chapter of my dissertation (Foster, 1998) included a discussion of the aforementioned authenticity criteria and their relevance in judging the "goodness and quality of the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). As well, by including this discussion, it was my hope to provide readers with a framework in which could be made transferability judgments about the findings of my investigation of leadership in two successful secondary schools.

Findings

The major finding of my doctoral study was that staff and students in both school sites regularly experienced, understood, and could communicate their understanding of "constructivist leadership" as defined by Lambert et al. (1995, p. 29). In both school sites, respondents perceived the respectful relationships to be the single most important factor contributing to their leadership experiences. Although all respondents valued and could explain their constructivist leadership experiences, none called the phenomenon "leadership." Parents did not experience leadership in the same way as staff and students. In one school site, parents looked to school administrators to provide for leadership; in the other, parents adopted their children's views without firsthand experience of the phenomenon. Recommendations for leadership research and practice are reported below and are based on this finding and others, including the importance the 41 respondents within these two successful secondary schools ascribed to: a shared philosophy, teacher leadership, and school size.

Secondary School Leadership

In undertaking this collective case study, it was not my intention to compare leadership in Riverview School with leadership in Evergreen Community High School. As Stake (1994) reminded us, "generalizations from differences between any two cases are

much less to be trusted than generalizations from one" (p. 242). Over the conduct of my study, it became clear to me that an understanding of leadership could not be separated from the socio-historical context in which it occurred. Nonetheless, at this point I wish to acknowledge and comment upon several similar themes which emerged from my study and analysis of leadership in Riverview and Evergreen schools, for I believe that such a discussion could be informative for researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners who are interested in leadership and involved in secondary school reform.

I have organized the following discussion on secondary school leadership under the headings: "Moving From a Vision to a Shared Philosophy," "Importance of Teacher Leadership," "School Size," and "Tensions Underlying the Context and Processes of Leadership."

Moving From a Vision to a Shared Philosophy. Long time staff members from both Riverview and Evergreen schools spoke about the evolution from what they perceived to be an "original vision" to a "shared school philosophy." All perceived that this evolution coincided with the development of a school culture characterized in each case by respectful relationships, trust, the centrality of learning, and the on-going discussions and conversations focused on making sense of events and experiences.

At Riverview, for example, where "things were not written down," long time staff members referred to the "pattern that had been established" since the arrival of the principal 11 years before. In the case study report of Riverview School, I included the following passage taken from my initial interview with the principal. Implicit in Al Brenneis' account of "becoming his own boss" is the vision underlying the changes that had occurred over time at Riverview:

> "I liked the feeling of being my own boss. I liked feeling free to make my own decisions and choices. That's how I learn the best. I thought if I was ever a school principal, I would try and give students and staff the opportunity to have that same experience. You have to be prepared for people to make mistakes. That's how we learn. The only people who don't make mistakes are those who don't do anything."

Implicit in this account as well are the values that I heard described and repeated in all of my interviews with students and staff members at Riverview. The importance that all respondents ascribed to freedom, trust, learning, and personal responsibility for choices comprised a collective philosophy at Riverview School that resembled what Sergiovanni (1996) described as a "moral voice":

> As simple as the idea of moral voice is, it has the potential to revolutionize school leadership. Instead of thinking about bureaucratic management and personal leadership as the driving forces that push and pull the school and its members

> forward, moral voice helps us think of leadership more as the cultivation of a shared followership. Community members are bonded together as they are bound to share commitments in a covenantal relationship. Principals and other administrators remain important, but are differently important. They have special responsibilities to behave as head followers of the community's ideas, values, and shared commitments.
> (p. 58)

Over time, as the original vision of "becoming your own boss" evolved into a shared philosophy or "moral voice," Al Brenneis' role had changed; he recognized that school members no longer looked just to him, the school principal, for ideas, permission, approval, or even to be chief problem-solver. In the case report, I quoted Al as saying that "they don't need me around here anymore." Similarly, I included Al's reference to the principal's office, once the hub of decision making and problem-solving within the school, as now being a "storage room" at Riverview. Over time, Al had remained important as principal of Riverview, but "differently important." Interesting perhaps, is that Al Brenneis has recently been appointed Assistant Superintendent within the school district of which Riverview is a part. In this capacity, he has taken on the challenge of supporting other principals as they "become their own bosses" in the district's newly approved site-based management governance model. Al Brenneis' commitment to his vision remains unwavering.

In Evergreen Community High School, long time staff members perceived that the current school philosophy had developed out of the vision upon which the original Evergreen private school had been founded. Evergreen founders, it was claimed, believed that the world was undergoing significant social change and that a community school modeled on democratic principles was the organizational form that would best prepare adolescent children for individual and collective participation in those changes. Implicit in the accounts of student, staff, and parent respondents at Evergreen were the socio-political ideas and values underpinning the creation of Evergreen. Over time, the value individuals placed on freedom, equality, mutual respect, individual expression, learning, and personal responsibility had become inextricably interwoven into the culture and traditions of Evergreen; they had become part of the shared "community understandings" (Sergiovanni, 1996); they had shaped and were reflected in the philosophy statement included in the current school handbook:

> Evergreen is a school based upon community involvement and strong support for individual expression. There is tolerance and latitude for this expression within the written rules of the school and within the behavioral standards which reflect the ethos of the community. The Evergreen community comprises parents, students, and staff working together to create a unique learning environment.

These values were enacted and affirmed through the participation of all school members as equals at school meetings and in all school governance committees (i.e., student behavior and discipline, criteria for school entrance). The importance that all respondents, including even the very newest school members, ascribed to participation in such activities underscored the extent to which the original vision of Evergreen had become a communal philosophy, guided by what Sergiovanni (1996) described as "natural will" and "moral authority":

> Compacts and shared commitments among principals, parents, teachers, and students and the moral authority they provide, are key in applying Community Theory to schools. As this authority becomes established, it speaks as a moral voice that substitutes for the usual management systems and leadership strategies we now use to provide direction, and to control people and events. This moral voice compels everyone in the school to meet their commitments, and to become self-managing. (p. 58)

Evergreen had acquired a principal when it had joined the large urban school district but, as had happened at Riverview, over time the room that had functioned and been labeled the "Principal's Office" had been symbolically transformed. At Evergreen where there was no principal on site, the principal's office had become a "teachers' room" and was only one of the several hubs where decision making and problem-solving occurred. Sometimes out of frustration over the time and effort required to work through problems and arrive at consensual decisions, school staff and students would call on Doug, school principal for the past seven years, for help and clarification in the processes that were becoming drawn out. To the disappointment of some, however, Doug saw himself as an outsider and his role as being largely "non-interventionist;" he had an unwavering belief in the Evergreen governance model characterized by its consensual decision making; he did not use his bureaucratic authority unless directed to by the school board. Interestingly, Doug recently retired as alternative secondary school principal in order to take up the challenge of running for the Canadian National Democratic Party in the last federal election. When asked about his motives given the improbability of winning, his reply was "someone has to do it." Respect for, and participation in the democratic process were imperatives in the mind of this designated school leader, regardless of the outcome.

In each case, long time participants believed that the school's reputation for success was attributable in part to the evolution from a vision to a collective and shared school philosophy. In both cases, participants perceived that this evolution had occurred over time and involved changes in the school culture and an entrenchment of shared values including mutual respect, trust, freedom, an emphasis on learning, and the on-going discussions and conversations focused on making sense of events and experiences. In each case, the role

of the school principal had become "differently important" as a result of the cultural changes which emphasized a shift from institutional to moral authority.

The shared governance leadership models currently being promoted by governments intent on reforming secondary schooling focus on a shift from institutional authority centered in the principalship to authority shared among all school members. In larger secondary schools, middle managers, including assistant principals, department heads, and curriculum leaders, as well as the principal are being re-cast as "one among equals" in the proposed shared decision making models (Blase & Blase, 1997; Tewel, 1995). Evidence from the case studies reported herein suggest that "time" is a critical factor in the shift from institutional to moral authority. Although not conclusive, the findings from the Riverview and Evergreen case studies raise some caution about the potential success of mandated shared governance models that may not necessarily allow sufficient "time" for the kind of cultural changes capable of supporting a move from "vision" to "shared philosophy."

Importance of Teacher Leadership. The principal, student, and parent respondents in both Riverview and Evergreen believed that each school's reputation for success was due largely to the efforts and expertise of the teachers. Almost all respondents in both schools credited the teachers for establishing the respectful and trusting school environment in which students claimed to experience a sense of freedom and support for their individual and collective learning endeavors.

Significant as well was that neither secondary school had guidance counselors or department heads. In both schools, students and parents perceived that the teachers fulfilled functions implicit in these roles and others; these respondents used terms like "coach," "counselor," and "guide" to describe the teachers. At Evergreen where students were on average older than students at Riverview, the term "mentor" was also used to describe the teachers who helped as individual students set academic goals and individualized learning agendas. At Riverview, students referred to the principals as "teachers" first and administrators second.

Teachers at Riverview School were self-described as "energy people" and "innovators." Al Brenneis, principal of Riverview, believed that the teachers were

> "people who others might consider 'difficult.' These are the kind of people, I find, who are the workers and the innovators. You just have to turn them loose and let them be their own boss."

In a similar vein, the Evergreen teachers described themselves as "unruly individuals" and "creators of curriculum."

Based on my own observations and analysis, I would describe the teachers of Riverview and Evergreen as chief facilitators in the "sense-making processes" going on in each school; these teachers were "constructivist leaders" (Lambert et al., 1996, p. xvii). However, respondents did not typically refer to the work or efforts of teachers as "leadership," in spite of the critical role respondents believed teachers played in each school site. Teachers seldom referred to their actions as "leadership" or themselves as "leaders." Lambert et al. argued that education reform to date has failed because of the traditional assumptions about school organization and leadership which underpin attempts at reform. In schools where patriarchal views of organization remain dominant, Lambert et al. contended, "teachers do not grow up;" teachers do not "progress through stages of adult development or become reflective practitioners" (p. 4). Arguing that schools must be restructured according to "networks of relationships rather than hierarchies of established roles and authority" (p. xvii), these authors claimed that teachers must come to see themselves as "constructivist leaders" and assume additional roles such as "guides and mentors" in the lives of children (p. 78). These authors outlined three changes that they believed were necessary in order that teachers might come to see themselves as constructivist leaders and their work as leadership:

1. A formal establishment of teacher leader roles
2. The development of leadership behaviors among all teachers
3. A redefinition of the role of the principal to one that is collaborative and inclusive. (p. 29)

In recent years, educational researchers and scholars have placed teacher professional development at the center of the school reform agenda (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Sykes, 1996). New perspectives underscore the shift from thinking of professional development as the occasional workshop or in-service designed to enhance individual technical expertise, to thinking of professional development as continuous adult learning which occurs in collaboration with others within supportive school communities (Barth, 1990; Lambert et al., 1996; Little, 1990). Findings from recent studies suggest that teacher learning is sustained through the development of team approaches to group problem-solving and group processing strategies which promote individual inquiry and reflection (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Lambert et al., 1996; Rallis, 1989). Within the professional development research literature, new perspectives are emerging which focus on the development of "teacher leadership" as key to education reform and enhanced student achievement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Lambert et al., 1996).

Although the evidence from the two case studies included in this paper is not conclusive, it does suggest that in order to bring about reform within schools, assumptions

about professional development as well as those underlying what are commonly considered the roles of "teacher" and "principal" must be challenged. Furthermore, the findings suggest that school leadership must be defined in terms of the capacity of teachers to facilitate and collaborate in the continuous learning and achievement of all school members.

School Size. Respondents in both Riverview and Evergreen believed that the small size of the school was a critical factor in supporting the development of the respectful relationships and positive learning environment in each school. In these "undermanned" secondary schools with no guidance counselors or department heads, respondents perceived that students and teachers developed a sense of interdependence and "authentic" relationships (Lambert et al., 1996) as they worked toward common goals of individual and collective learning.

The issue of high school size, Lee and Smith (1997) contended, has "received much attention in theoretical and popular writings about education, as well as in reports spelling out ideas for reforming schools" (p. 217). The prevalent belief that "smaller is better" has prompted several research projects in recent years intent on establishing linkages between school size and improved student learning. Findings from Lee and Smith's extensive study of the impact of high school size upon student learning suggested that moderate-sized high schools of between 600 and 900 were ideal when considering optimal student achievement in core subjects including language arts and mathematics (p. 217). In a very thorough discussion of how to "change high school size" given that many existent high school buildings house upwards from 2 000 students, these authors cited recent research that has been conducted on creating "a set of smaller schools-within-schools inside larger high schools" (p. 220). Constraining unit size, they argued, "may help to promote the human dimensions of schooling" (p. 208). In a similar vein, Raywid (1998) in her synthesis of recent research conducted on small schools contended that "small schools lead to improved student achievement and enable educators to realize many of the other goals of school reform" (p. 34).

Although not conclusive, the findings from the Riverview and Evergreen case studies reported in this paper suggest that the small school size had significant implications for the context and processes of leadership within each school. The findings reported herein are consistent with research findings which prompted Barker and Gump (1964) to conclude:

> The data of this research and our own educational values tell us that a school should be sufficiently small that all of its students are needed for its enterprises. A school should be small enough that students are not redundant. (p. 202)

Although Raywid (1998) cautioned against looking at recent findings from the small school research as the "silver bullet" for improved student achievement, she was optimistic in her conclusion that:

> The accumulating, now substantial evidence tells us that small schools offer a setting that can accommodate and build in much of what educational research is recommending. They provide a promising reply to many of the questions that plague us, such as, How can we get effective change? and How can we make schools work for at-risk students? And they offer what is perhaps our most promising single strategy for realizing a number of the goals of current reformers--including new governance and accountability arrangements, personalization and individualization, strong professional communities, authentic instruction and engagement, and genuine and lasting achievement for a great many more youngsters. (p. 38)

Tensions Underlying the Context and Processes of Leadership. Even though Riverview and Evergreen were both schools with a reputation for success where constructivist leadership as described by Lambert et al. (1995) was observable and understandable to participants, there was still evidence, for example, of:

1. Confusion between leadership and management. In Riverview School, school members looked to the principals to provide for such managerial tasks as timetabling and student discipline even though the same school members did not necessarily involve the principals in making sense of personal experiences and academic challenges. At Evergreen, even though school members were used to operating without the support of a school-based principal, when challenges arose, their response was to consult with the principal even when they knew that he would not intervene. In both schools, when respondents were initially asked about leadership, there was a tendency to focus on the "good management" skills of the principal (Rost, 1991, p. 180).
2. An elusive understanding of relationships and the exercise of influence within relationships. Confusion over the exercise of influence within relationships was most apparent in both schools when individuals acted in such a way that they were asked to withdraw from the school due to some transgression of school rules.
3. Competing theories and notions about what leadership actually is. Participants regularly experienced, understood, and could communicate their understanding of the phenomenon described as constructivist leadership (p. 29). They did not, however, call the phenomenon "leadership."

Findings here are not conclusive, but are consistent with those of other researchers and theorists within the fields of organizational (Bass, 1990; Heifetz, 1994; Immegart; 1988, Rost, 1991; Wheatley, 1992) and educational leadership (Lambert, 1995; Sergiovanni,

1996) who are presently calling for the development of new perspectives on the leadership phenomenon.

Conclusions

Given the emphasis that is currently placed on quality and accountability in public education, coupled with the belief that secondary schools require restructuring in order to bring about desired social reform, it is the moment to consider new perspectives on secondary school leadership. The purpose of the study reported herein (Foster, 1998) was to present an original perspective on leadership. In the preceding, a summary of the findings as well as the overarching themes which emerged from the analysis of the case studies were offered as "illustrations" of how leadership was experienced and understood, at a particular point in time, by individuals in two successful secondary schools.

In her explanation of the overall aims of research, Merriam elaborated on the significance of the "single study:"

> 'The value of any single study is derived as much from how it fits with and expands on previous work as from the study's intrinsic properties.' And if some studies seem more significant than others, it is 'because the piece of the puzzle they solve (or the puzzle they introduce) is extremely important, not because they are solutions in and of themselves (Cooper, 1984).' (Merriam, 1988, p. 61)

It is now incumbent upon the reader to make transferability judgments based on the findings presented within this paper in order to ascertain the nature of the "piece of the puzzle" that has been provided.

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